

MM 93-48

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From: Lorne K Garrettson <lgarret@emory.edu>
To: A16.A16(kidstv)
Date: 10/12/95 4:23pm
Subject: Content of TV programming for children

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OCT 12 1995

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There should be age-appropriate programming provided on a regular basis for several different age groups. To my mind, the most important age group is the 3 to 5 yr group. This is an age when the brain is still growing, when sensory input still has an impact on brain growth. Programming should engage the child in doing and reacting, not just watching and being 'entertained.' Sesame street has set a good standard but much more could be done, I think, to engage the young viewer.

Most children's programming fails to engage. Children watch but don't interact. A case can be made that children who watch such programming have little or no growth stimulating experience from the viewing. The result of the absence or limitation of such experience is now called poverty-associated-mental-retardation. Programming could be studied to ensure that it has stimulating activity as a means of overcoming this prevalent problem in our society.

FCC guidelines should put pressure on networks to provide such creative programming.

Lorne Garrettson, MD
Assoc Prof Pediatrics
Emory Univ School of Med.

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From: <sstowel1@ic3.ithaca.edu>
To: A16.A16(kidstv)
Date: 10/11/95 8:59pm
Subject: Children's TV Guidelines

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OCT 12 1995

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
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October 11, 1995

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Secretary of the FCC:

There has been a lot of discussion lately concerning the guidelines for children's television programming. As it is now, I do not think that there is a sufficient amount of children's television programs on television. Our children are turning to the tube more and more everyday and the values of the media are enforcing are far from "educational."

Sex, drugs and violence dominate the majority of television content. We, the people and the media, need to understand that children are like wet cement, everything leaves an impression. By subjecting our children to shows like, "NYPD Blue", "Married with Children", and "Melrose Place" the media is conveying the idea that the values and morals presented in those shows are correct. If kids grow up watching and believing these false "values" they are going to have an unrealistic view of society, and possibly cause harm to themselves or others. Especially now, in the era of the "latch-key" we should monitor television content more closely.

As television programming exists now, quality educational programming is lacking. The stations that do claim to run educational programming, other than PBS, air the shows on Sunday mornings at 5:30, when a lot of kids can't see them. Few shows are going to be viewed under these conditions.

According to a sales chief for one major syndicator, "stations will tell you that there isn't enough educational programming available, but, if they assume that kids won't watch it, they program it at low-viewership times and don't promote it. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy."

I suggest that all major networks air three to four hours of children's programming a day, between the hours of 8 and 11 a.m. or 2 and 5 p.m. Stations must make greater efforts to comply with the Children's Television Act of 1990. Studies show that most stations now are only airing the minimal amount of educational programming required. I think each station should publish a yearly newsletter or parent guideline, describing the content of each show it airs. The guide should give a brief description of the series, the time it will air and certain age restrictions they feel apply. Also, the FCC should monitor each station monthly to be sure they are complying with all the rules and regulations. I strongly disagree with the proposal by networks to pay other stations to air their shows for them. Each station should be responsible for their own programming. By enforcing this rule, it would provide a broader spectrum of educational programs for parents and children to choose from. In this respect, parents would have more leeway in what they want their children to watch.

In closing, I would like to urge the FCC to use its power to strongly enforce networks to air more educational programming. It will benefit our children and our nation in the long run.

Samantha Stowell
Ithaca College
Ithaca, New York

CC: FCCMAIL.SMTP("massmedia@liber.ithaca.edu", "fritz@i...

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From: <Thomas_Dicorcia_23950.Ebina_OIS@fujixerox.xerox.com>
To: A16.A16(kidstv)
Date: 10/11/95 10:16pm
Subject: I Support Standards for Kids9 TV

OCT 12 1995

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
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RE: Docket number: MM Docket No. 93-48

My name is Tom DiCorcia. I am an American citizen living abroad. When I return to the United States, it will be with my first child. My wife and I plan to keep our child away from television as much as possible -- we feel that strongly about the poor quality of content made available by broadcasters.

But, we know that our child will have friends -- and many of these friends will be watching TV. At the point when we feel that our child's social life is suffering due to unfamiliarity with certain TV characters, we will probably have to break down and allow some TV watching. This needn't be such a horrible thing. There is nothing inherently wrong with the medium itself, it is just that the programming is poor.

I believe that broadcasters, as sober businesspeople, look at two things:

1. Will the show grab attention, and thus expose advertising?
2. Are the production costs low?

I know that it is possible to create high quality programming which is also popular -- look at Sesame Street. It just may cost more to produce such programming, then it does to create something of lower quality.

Because there is no market mechanism to encourage high quality programming over lower cost low content programming, I feel that regulation is necessary.

This regulation need not hurt the business. First of all, more parents may be willing to let their children watch more TV if they knew the programming were good. Furthermore, advertisers may pay a premium to have their advertisements air on a known high quality show. Their products may benefit from association with high quality programming.

If programming does not improve, we can try and continue to keep our child from watching TV. And we will certainly try to show our child what a waste of time most TV is. If this happens, then I will have considered the FCC to have wasted a national resource. Those television frequencies will have no value to me or my family.

Please institute standards for childrens TV and please continue to push for accountability by broadcasters to live up to the high responsibility which should be a part of any broadcast right granted by the FCC.

Sincerely,

Tom DiCorcia

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From: MS GWYNNE GILSON <WTKX75B@prodigy.com>
To: A16.A16(kidstv)
Date: 10/11/95 10:59pm
Subject: MM Docket 93-48

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OFFICE OF SECRETARY

I am writing to urge you to rewrite rules for children's television programming that will require the networks to raise the standard of TV shows offered for children.

Specifically, I recommend the following:

****Set a standard of at least one hour per day of specifically-designed education and informational programming, not the current 3 hours per week. Identify these shows in program guide publications.**

****Redefine the definition of "educational & informational" to close the loophole which permitted stations to cite "G.I. Joe", "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles", "The Jetsons", and "The Flintstones" as compliance programming.**

****Count only standard-length, regularly scheduled educational programs as meeting a station's "core" obligations. Key more programs to kids under 12, even though they don't have as much money to spend as teenagers.**

****Exclude programs aired before 7 AM or after 10 PM from counting toward the "core" requirement.**

Please distribute these comments to each of the commissioners.

Thank you for your attention.

Gwynne Gilson

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From: <eepstei1@ic3.ithaca.edu>
To: A16.A16(kidstv)
Date: 10/11/95 11:35pm

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
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Dear Federal Communications Commission,

I am a seventeen year old freshman at Ithaca College, enrolled in the television/radio department. For the last semester I have been studying the affects of television on children, and I urge you to begin setting strict standards for quality and content of children's television, and all daytime television programs.

With T.V. sets on in the inner city for eleven hours a day, with video, pay per view, and multiplying cable channels, T.V. has become the closest and most constant companion for American children. (U.S. News and World Report, The Victims of TV Violence, August 2, 1993) Children learn by example. Twenty years ago children spent most of their time watching their mother's and father's, and following their examples. Today, an overwhelming number of families require two income's to make ends meet, or are run by a single, working parent. The examples that children follow, their 'perfect' roll models, are coming to them through the television set. Peg and Al Bundy (Married With Children) teach them that marriage leads to an unhappy, poor existence; While Kelly and Bud Bundy show promiscuity as a virtue and being intelligent as nerdy. Television is filled with sexual stereotypes, discrimination of all kinds and gratuitous violence.

By the age of 18, according to one estimate, a child will have seen 2,000 acts of violence on T.V., including 40,000 murders. It is no wonder that violent crime is becoming a way of life for so many of America's youths. Violence is shown as an acceptable way to solve problems, and as a game. Cartoons are possibly the most guilty of teaching children that violence is a game, but cartoon characters do not die or suffer consequences.

The way women and men are portrayed on television perpetuates harmful gender myths. Women are made to look over-emotional and viewed as weak because of it, and men are expected to be strong and not show their feelings. The image of women is as emaciated and young, an image which most women and girls cannot live up to. The astounding number of females, especially young females, who suffer from eating disorders is a direct result of this stereotype. The image of men is one of muscles and broad shoulders, an image which most men and boys cannot live up to. Many males, especially young males, try to compensate for physical strength with harsh words and violent actions.

I strongly advocate safe hours, during which shows with violent content can not be aired. This would help parents who cannot be home with their children during the day to regulate what they are exposed to. I also am in favor of promoting the V-chip, which would block programs with certain levels of violence. Opposers of the new technology argue that there is a difference between senseless violence and violence with a just cause. They are correct. A rating system would need to be developed to distinguish harmful violence from warranted violence. The potential benefits of the V-chip are far more important than the new issues it raises are bothers.

Children are the future of our nation, we cannot continue to bombard them with negative media, and then blame them for having no morals. If we want to raise responsible and respectful children, we must make a commitment to protect them, and give them positive roll models.

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From: BETSY LINDLER <I991060%UNIVSCVM.BITNET@VTBIT.CC.VT.EDU>
To: A16.A16(KIDSTV)
Date: 10/12/95 8:10am
Subject: children's programming

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Hello. My name is Betsy Lindler. I am the Media Specialist at Burton Elementary School in Columbia, SC.

I am responding to MM Docket No. 93-48, concerning television programming for children. I don't see much out there in tv-land for children at the present. No wonder the kids want to grow up so fast, have babies when they're babies themselves, commit suicide, do drugs. All that's pushed at them on the tube is the message that grownups have more fun; that it's cool to make all the mistakes that adults make (and the sooner, the better).

A possible solution: go back to family shows in the 8:00 - 10:00 PM time slot. I don't think the networks will lose a lot of advertising \$\$\$\$ but will simply see a change in the type of companies who choose to advertise during those shows (maybe not). And you can save the sex (open or inuendo) for after 10. Nobody will suffer, not even the adults. And the kids will benefit.

I hope that whatever you do, you will keep the TRUE interest of children in mind. We only have one chance to make each child the best that s/he can be!

BETSY LINDLER
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From: <mbrombe1@ic3.ithaca.edu>
To: A16.A16(KIDSTV)
Date: 10/12/95 4:06pm

October 12, 1995

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Honorable Commissioners:

The Federal Communications Commission's proposed changes of the Children's Television Act of 1990 will provide quality programming to children. Children are widely regarded as a passive audience; many soak up the information from such programs as "Mighty Morphin Power Rangers" and "Beavis and Butthead," and reenact harmful, sometimes even deadly situations. Unfortunately, many single or working parents cannot watch their children twenty-four hours a day. The new proposals to the Children's Television Act of 1990, according to the "Journal of Broadcasting and Educational Media," are the following: "(1) judgments of the quality of a licensee's programming, educational or otherwise, are made by the audience, not the federal government;(2) the Commission's rules and processes should be as clear, simple, and fair as possible; and (3) broadcasters should be guided by market forces, to the greatest extent possible, in determining whether they meet their programming obligations." These proposals will prevent television stations from airing programs that might harm children.

First, I feel that the key point of the modifications to the Children's Television Act of 1990 is that the audience will have input rather than the federal government. Parents and educators are more familiar with children's behavior than politicians. For instance, when I was a child, I would repeat the actions of my favorite TV shows. Sometimes I would repeat "Sesame Street" phrases, but other times I would fight with other children pretending I was a character from "GI Joe." When my parents discovered that I had been hurting other children, they prevented me from watching "GI Joe." Many other children are in a similar situation; they mimic television programs and characters. The federal

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government cannot prevent children from viewing violent or harmful programs. Parents are better suited to judge whether a program is appropriate for a child than the government.

Next, the Commission's proposal to provide clear, simple, and fair rules will positively affect the CTA of 1990. Based on the "Journal of Broadcasting & Educational Media," the CTA of 1990: "has determined that short-segment content may be counted...toward a station's fulfillment of its educational programming obligation"; it has "declined to require age-specific targeting (e.g., to pre-school or elementary school-aged child audiences) of any educational programming"; and it has "allowed the broadcaster to determine what programming qualifies as educational/informational content." These policies do not prevent stations from airing programs that could be detrimental to children. In addition, they allow stations to air 30-second commercials at 3 AM and satisfy their educational requirements. The new proposal will make it clear that the preceding example is no longer considered an educational program.

Finally, the Commission proposes that stations utilize market forces to guide broadcaster behavior. This will enable stations to air a certain number of hours on its own station or by sponsoring a number of hours on another station in the market. Stations will then draw money from sponsors and fulfill their requirements.

To conclude, the Children's Television Act of 1990 allows stations to air programs that may corrupt the minds of children and to air programs that are not necessarily educational. The modifications to the CTA of 1990 enable stations to gather input from adults, provide clear, simple, and fair rules to stations, and to utilize market forces in determining whether they meet their programming obligations. These changes will benefit children and all of society.

Sincerely Yours,
Marc Bromberg

CC: MASSMEDIA <MASSMEDIA@ic3.ithaca.edu>

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From: <hralph1@ic3.ithaca.edu>
To: A16.A16(kidstv)
Date: 10/12/95 3:38pm

Honorable FCC Commissioners:

Hello, my name is Hollie Ralph and I am a student at Ithaca College studying television and radio broadcasting. Through my personal research on children's programming, I have come to several conclusions and formed various opinions that I would like you, the FCC, to read over.

Knowing that television is filled with violence, obscene language, and sexual content, none of which should be viewed by young children, we, as the viewers (children and parents), broadcasters and the FCC should make it our responsibility to give the younger generation a positive and enjoyable outlet, such as educational children programming. Despite the fact that young children do not have the economic resources to spend on the advertisers' products, the quality and quantity of children's educational programming should not be sacrificed.

In reading the article entitled "kids Are Not Alright" by Eric Schmuckler in MEDIAWEEK, June 19, 1995, I found that the Fox network leads the kids ratings at 6.2, followed by ABC's 3.9, leaving CBS, which led in the 1992-93 season, to plummet 36% to a 3.7. In fear of this decrease, and also with the emergence of Warner Bros.' Kids WB, CBS may replace Saturday mornings kids shows with a news show, even though kids programs remain profitable for the station. Senior vp at Grey Advertising, Jon Mandel stated, "Even if you lose \$10 million in kids, it's worth it if it keeps your nose clean with the FCC.

I agree with FCC chairman Reed Hundt in his backing of the proposal that requires an increase in the number of the hours of educational programming to be aired by stations. Although the requirement of three hours a week, increasing by half an hour each year for the next four years, bringing the total to five hours per

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week, still is not enough. We are talking about the future leaders of our country and it is absurd that five hours of children's educational programming has to be mandated. I feel that broadcasters themselves should want to run more children's educational programming, not only to benefit the children, but to benefit the future of their own stations when the children grow up and start taking over their stations. Do they want uneducated people running what used to be theirs? Doubtfully, so why do they want to pay another station to run their educational programming and why should there even be proposals to mandate a minimum number of children's educational programming hours? Well, according to the article entitled "New Kids' Rules on Hold" by Cheryl Heuton in MEDIAWEEK, March 13, 1995, stations do not want to interrupt their schedules and they feel that the requirements would be an 'unwarranted government intrusion into programming decisions.' Doug Wills, a spokesman for the NAB said, "To impose quotas on children's programming would be like telling us how many sitcoms we have to run, or how many hour dramas." Although I can see and understand Wills' point, I disagree because educational programs are promoting the improvement of our country and its people, where sitcoms and hour dramas are primarily entertainment for the older generation, therefore, I don't think the two can be compared.

These are our children we are discussing and arguments against their education should not be taken lightly. We must educate them so that they, in return, can better our country and their children, as well.

Concerned viewer,

Hollie Ralph
1+ralph1@ic3.ithaca.edu

CC: FCCMAIL.SMTP("massmedia@liber.ithaca.edu")